



"Committed to the protection and promotion of public health"

Gallatin City-County Health Department

For more information, contact
Health Department at 582-3100

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Baby Animals and Diarrhea

As spring approaches, baby animals are being born across Montana. While baby animals are cute, when not handled properly they can also spread microorganisms to humans that cause diarrhea. Animals of particular concern for transmitting diarrheal diseases include young ruminants (lambs, calves, and kids), young birds (chicks, ducklings, and goslings), reptiles, amphibians, and any animal that is visibly ill.

Although the proportion of diarrheal illnesses that are associated with animals is unknown, outbreaks of one particular type of illness, *Salmonella* infections, have been linked to exposure to baby chicks and ducklings. Many of these outbreaks have occurred during spring (March-June), particularly around Easter. Children may be at risk for acquiring *Salmonella* infection from these pet or farmyard birds after they receive them as gifts. Children also are less likely to wash their hands after handling or playing with baby animals and have more frequent hand-to-mouth contact than adults.

Here's some information on what you can do to keep you and your family safe while enjoying pets and animals:

- Wash hands (and those of children) for at least 20 seconds with soap and water immediately after contact with animals. If soap and water are unavailable, use alcohol-based hand wipes and gel sanitizers.
- Do not purchase chicks, ducklings or other baby animals as pets for children under age 5 or for people with weakened immune systems.
- Supervise children when handling baby animals. Do not allow children to
 - nuzzle or kiss baby animals;
 - touch their mouths with their hands;
 - handle sick animals;
 - eat and drink before washing their hands thoroughly.
- Keep chicks, ducklings and other baby birds in a designated area away from family living spaces.
- If an adult or child has a high fever, severe diarrhea or other symptoms after handling baby birds, contact a health care provider.

For more information on baby birds as pets and *Salmonella* click here:

http://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/easter_chicks.htm